

Whatever happened to Video Vern's?

A Holladay Village Project Update

By: Holladay City Staff

Since its creation, in late 1999, the City of Holladay has had the goal of creating a vibrant and beautiful downtown area, reflective of our unique history. Almost immediately, the city began exploring what should and could be done to stop the deterioration of our downtown area and develop a plan for the future. This process has involved numerous meetings and countless hours from residents, downtown businesses, community leaders, and planning professionals. The resulting vision of the downtown revitalization project was labeled “the Holladay Village Center” and later simply called the “Holladay Village”.

Each day when we pass the old Video Vern's site, we are reminded of why that vision was needed. Frankly, that vacant lot also raises the question about why nothing has yet been constructed in its place. In order to answer that question, we thought it would be helpful to provide an overview of what has been accomplished, and what still needs to be done to move the Holladay Village project forward.

Master Planning

The City of Holladay first adopted the Holladay Village Center Overlay Zone in the fall of 2000. A building moratorium on development in the Village Zone was subsequently adopted in December of 2002 to allow adequate time for development and adoption of a master plan to guide development within this important commercial area. A framework master plan was adopted in late 2004. The master plan was refined with detailed design standards for adoption in the fall of 2006. Again, the process involved many public meetings and vital input from our citizens and business community.

Redevelopment Agency (RDA)

The City formed the Village Center RDA in late 2005. This entity provided the City with an important tool and resource for implementing the Village master plan, including the use of tax-increment funding. A project budget for the Village Center RDA was adopted in February of 2005. That budget and tax-increment financing over a 15-year period was subsequently approved by the Taxing Entity Committee consisting of the Granite School District, Salt Lake County, State School Board, City of Holladay, and other taxing entities.

Video Vern's Property

As the planning process moved forward, the City was presented with the opportunity to purchase the Video Vern's property on the northwest corner of Holladay Boulevard and Murray-Holladay Road. That site was viewed as a cornerstone for making the Holladay Village vision a reality. The City acquired the Video Vern's property in April of 2005. The dilapidated structure was demolished in the fall of 2005.

Based on developer proposals, the City selected Holladay Village Associates, LLC of which Cowboy Partners is a development partner, to acquire the Video Vern's parcel and

to negotiate a developmental agreement. The Village Center Redevelopment Agency (RDA) and the developer recently completed the purchase and development agreement in February of 2008. Holladay Village Associates has the design for this portion of the Village currently underway.

Federal Funding

In 2005, the City of Holladay applied for federal funding assistance for the transportation related work in the Village. With the support of all of Utah's congressional delegation, the city was successful in obtaining grant funding commitments of approximately \$8 million. These funds are matched with approximately \$1.7 million by the City. Project elements include roadway reconstruction and beautification along the primary corridors of Murray-Holladay Road, 2300 East, and Holladay Boulevard. Also included is the extension of Laney Avenue connecting to 2300 East and a pedestrian plaza area at what is now the five-point intersection. This funding is available in increments from 2007 through 2010 and is administered through Utah Department of Transportation. The funding will provide the backbone for the Holladay Village redevelopment.

Project Design

In an attempt to obtain federal funding, an environmental study / categorical exclusion (CAT X) report as required by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) was completed in July of 2007 by Lochner Engineering. Lochner was subsequently selected to continue with the project design, which is nearly complete. Construction was targeted for the spring of this year. However, final design and construction have been delayed due to two unexpected problems related to environmental contamination and utility relocation(s) as discussed below.

Bumps in the Road

1. Solvent Contamination of Site of Project Area: As part of the due diligence process associated with property acquisition for the roadway work, significant areas of solvent-contaminated soils were discovered. Environmental testing is on-going at the time of this article. The final extent of the contamination has not yet been determined. The project has been redesigned to minimize the cost of the environmental impacts. However, the problem has resulted in a project delay and budgeting concerns that need to be addressed. The city is already seeking additional funding assistance for environmental impacts to allow the project to move forward.

2. Utility and Powerlines Relocations: As the design proceeded, it became increasingly clear that the burial or relocation of the over-head powerlines is not only preferable, but necessary to properly implement the Holladay Village Master Plan. Rocky Mountain Power is currently under contract to provide detailed design options and refined cost estimates for powerline relocations. Other utility companies have been notified of the city's plans to reconstruct these major corridors, and have been encouraged to replace aged or substandard utilities ahead of the roadway construction process.

What's next

Given the remaining bumps in the road for this project, it appears likely that construction will be delayed one season to spring of 2009. We very much appreciate the input and cooperative assistance from Holladay residents and our business community as we progress through a highly complex process involving multiple funding sources, multiple stakeholders and property owners, complex regulatory issues, and unexpected environmental problems. The City remains committed to the Holladay Village vision of an economically vibrant and beautiful downtown area. We are excited about the benefits it will bring for many decades in the future.

For those who have questions or wish to discuss the Village plans and progress, we invite you to visit with your City Council Member, City Manager Mr. Randy Fitts or our city staff.